

Asaph Ben-Tov. *Lutheran Humanists and Greek Antiquity: Melanchthonian Scholarship between Universal History and Pedagogy*.

Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 183. Leiden: Brill, 2009. xi + 235 pp. index. bibl. \$147. ISBN: 978-90-04-17965-3.

This addition to Brill's Studies in Intellectual History series sets out to assess how one of the major interests of Renaissance humanism, the history and literature of classical Greek antiquity, was reinterpreted by protestant thinkers of the sixteenth century. As well as Philipp Melanchthon, Asaph Ben-Tov examines the writings of less well-known figures such as David Chytraeus, Martin Crusius, Michael

Neander, and Stefan Gerlach, and stresses that, whatever the doctrinal differences of Protestants and Catholics, they were wholly in agreement as to the laudability of the literary culture of ancient Greece. After an introduction that carefully lays out the terms of reference, the author shows how the Lutherans placed ancient Greece within a wider context of universal Christian history leading up to the last days in which they believed themselves to be living. Melanchthon's account of the period in his *Chronicon carionis* reflects the four monarchies prophesy in the Book of Daniel, with the spread of Greek civilization following Alexander the Great's overthrow of the Persian Empire being seen as the third monarchy. Moving from history to literature, Ben-Tov examines what use Melanchthon and others saw the writings of long-dead pagans as having to adherents of reformed religion and an interesting chapter discusses how Lutherans read ancient authors such as Homer and Heliodorus. Classical reception is, of course, a topic of perennial interest but one unusual feature of this book is the inclusion of a chapter on the Lutheran approach to the Byzantine empire (330–1453 CE). Ben-Tov justifies its presence by showing that for the reformers there was no clear distinction between Greek antiquity and Byzantium which they saw as a continuation of Greek rather than Roman history (84, 87). As one might expect, their attitude was ambivalent. Constantinople was seen as a storehouse of ancient wisdom but the Byzantine emperors who ruled there were given little credit for maintaining their empire for so long. Even the eighth-century iconoclast emperors who attempted to abolish the veneration of images receive little credit from Melanchthon (87–88). German Protestants were also very interested in tracing how Greek scholarship had been transmitted to their region. They all endorsed the idea of the classics coming west with Greek scholars fleeing from the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Particular significance was attached to a conversation believed to have taken place between Melanchthon's patron Johannes Reuchlin and one of those Byzantine émigrés, John Argyropoulos, in Rome in 1482. It is, as Ben-Tov points out, an "imaginary pedigree" but by no means as far-fetched as the efforts of some Renaissance scholars to connect themselves to the ancient world (210–11).

Overall, this is a carefully researched and clearly written study that will appeal to a broad scholarly audience, touching as it does on ancient history, Byzantium, the Renaissance, and the Reformation. Regrettably, it does have to be pointed out that it contains far more typographical errors than are acceptable. There are mistakes in the Latin with *transaltio* for *translatio* (101), *chorincon* for *chronicon* (110) and the title of Michael Neander's 1583 work being given differently on successive pages (125–26). There are mistakes in the English with Donald Nicol becoming "Nicole" (95) and the everyday phrase *make do* becoming *make due* (119, 120). There are mistakes in dates: 1443/4 should be 1543/4 (91). The spelling of Greek and Byzantine names is particularly erratic. Niketas Choniates, for example, is called Nicephorus (105) and Choniates (129). The first name of the Greek historian Chalcondyles (or more correctly Chalcocondyles) is usually given here as Laonicus but on one occasion as Laonikos (129). Plethon is both Gemistus (127) and Gemistos (129). Eparchos becomes Epaechos (91) and Ioasph, Ioasph (92). The list could be extended

considerably. I suspect that this is the result of cost-cutting by academic publishers who leave the author to be the sole proofreader. It is a false economy, as it undermines the authority of what is otherwise a stimulating and informative work.

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